

Washington University
Saint Louis, MO

**Earth and Planetary Sciences and
Environmental Studies**
Bachelor of Arts, May 2005

**NASA Academy Research Project:
Charting the History of Earth's Earliest
Microbial Ecosystems**



Principal Investigator: Dr. David Des Marais

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Education and Experience:

The exotic promise of outer space is certainly enough to catch the eye of a young girl growing up in rural Missouri. And, not surprisingly, this was indeed my case. For as long as I can remember I've been interested in the mysteries of outer space, but never in becoming an astronaut. Instead, my childhood ambition was to head Mission Control. I knew there was more to space expeditions than the glamour of wearing shiny suits and floating around all day. I knew there were scientists on the ground making calculations and asking the important questions—and that's where I wanted to be.

My two years at Washington University in St. Louis have already given me scientific opportunities I could never have imagined as a young girl. I am lucky enough to work with some of those "scientists on the ground" on a daily basis, and the experiences I've gained from these interactions have been unbelievable. My interest in astrobiology has grown since I began working in a microbial geochemistry lab as a freshman; since then, I've been involved in various projects on understanding life in extreme environments. Following fieldwork in Vulcano, Italy, early this summer, I will begin an undergraduate research project on hyperthermophilic Archaeons and their roles in the biogeochemical cycles of hydrothermal vent environments.

Extracurricular Interests:

Outside of class and the lab, I enjoy some tumbling time with Wash U's gymnastics club team. I also serve as an Arts and Sciences peer advisor, helping to guide freshmen through that perilous transition from high school to college life. When I'm not enjoying St. Louis, I can be found visiting my family, friends, and my four horses at Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri, where, in the summer, I take advantage of abounding water-sporting opportunities. I've also been lucky enough to spend every Christmas since I was ten on the ski slopes with my family at our cabin in the Colorado Rockies. It is this mix of family, friends, and academics that has always defined my life and that now keeps me focused on fulfilling all those lofty aspirations I had as a young girl.